

**THE RUGBY FIVES ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 23rd SEPTEMBER 2020**

General Secretary's Report

Despite the abrupt ending of the season in March, the year was marked by a number of activities both on and off court which demonstrate the commitment of the RFA to ensuring the long term health of the game.

The development of tournaments continued apace with the following additions:-

- The inaugural Challenger tournament was held at Alleyn's. Twelve entrants competed in an event aimed at players outside the top rankings. The plan is to schedule three or four of these events every season
- A new regional tournament for schools in the north of England

Other tournaments continued to be well supported in the main, particularly noteworthy was The Owers Trophy which attracted seven clubs and nine teams meaning that it was the best turn-out in the five years of playing the new format.

There was also good news regarding courts. In Manchester, the floors of the Y Club courts were refurbished and the walls repainted whilst the RFA contributed funds towards an upgrade in the quality of lighting. At Stoke Newington School, the RFA approved a grant towards the construction of viewing platforms which will enable the resumption of fives playing. These are scheduled to be installed in September at which time training will be provided to sports teachers. Development Officer Gareth Price has played a key role in getting these platforms built and encouraging fives playing at the school to restart. Elsewhere in London, St. Dunstan's announced plans to build two courts on their main site. More disappointing was the failure of Calderdale Council to engage with efforts from local players to re-open the courts in Halifax.

North of the border, Strathallan School in Perthshire reported that fives had been re-introduced on squash courts.

Away from the cut and thrust of fives playing, an integrated five year business plan was developed and agreed to deliver the RFA's objectives of developing the game and attracting a broader demographic of players. The plan has three phases: For 'Sustain', the aim is to prevent further contraction of the sport and maintain the key components of Fives; for 'Nurture', the aim is to build on the foundations set and improve and develop Fives for its playing community; and finally for 'Grow', the objective is to expand the sport and strive for the long-term vision of opening up the sport to new players.

During lockdown, several exciting initiatives were developed often led by younger members of the RFA. An informative and entertaining series of ten Fives Pods were broadcast covering a range of topics including player profiles, courts and club developments. Two highly successful rugby fives pub quizzes not only helped relieve the gloom of lockdown but also raised £1,355 against a target of £250.

On the marketing front, Dan Grant was appointed on a short term consultancy basis to support raising awareness of fives and encourage new people to take up the game. A major activity of his has been to restructure the website in a way that maintains its function of disseminating news whilst creating the capability to sell the sport to both new players and to potential funders.

Tournaments are of course a major feature of the season and involve organisers in a lot of work. In order to make their life easier, a comprehensive set of guidelines is being developed along with online entry and software for use on the day.

Sadly, two deaths were reported during the season, these being Stuart Endersby, a gifted left hander from Bedford School who reached the final of the National Schools in 1969, and John Burton, a stalwart of the RFA Club and a longstanding Jester (obit. June 2017).

**Phil Atkinson
General Secretary
August 2020**